

6/12/07 Workshop
Suction Dredge Mining
Deadline: 6/22/07 Noon

From: "Randy Witham" <randywitham@charter.net>
To: <commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: Thu, May 24, 2007 7:55 AM
Subject: Concerned Citizen Comments -- Suction Dredging -- For the State Water Board

Dear Clerk to the Board,

My e-mail concerns the submission of comments for continuing to allow suction dredge mining. It is very important for the State Water Board consider the many benefits of prospecting in general and suction dredge mining in specific, and citizen's rights under the Mining Law of 1872. We need to not only allow, but encourage more dredging. I can't comment on all the right reasons, but here are a few to consider:

First, this is a fantastic opportunity for people, families, retirees to get outdoors and enjoy nature. Too many reasons exist today to limit, restrict, ban or otherwise make off-limits the bounty and beauty of nature. This is a safe and fun way to enjoy the outdoors and promote physical activity and general health. Too many folks simply stay indoors, in part because they have restricted/limited access to God's green earth.

Second, suction dredging is a great way to improve the river/creek environment. It allows the common dredger, to be the "friend" of the stream by removing unwanted/dangerous heavy metals, such as lead fishing sinkers, lead birdshot and bullets and mercury. Being heavy metals, these collect in the sluice box and are removed, reducing the pollution they cause.

Third, suction dredging turns over the bed rock in specific locations, creating deeper pool areas for fish to hid and stream life to utilize. I have been dredging many times and have found native fish sharing my hole, hunting for bugs/food as I turn rocks over and move around. No damage is done to the stream bed, as natural water flows eventually refill the dredge locations during annual flooding.

Fourth, the oxygenation effects of the water tumbling thru the sluice box can be a big benefit for slower moving rivers/creeks. Some waterways are very slow moving, without rapids or waterfalls. Dredging adds value to the water with extra oxygen for all stream life.

In summary, I respectfully ask the board to consider the facts that suction dredging does not damage the river/stream, water life or contribute to any negative factors. Quite the opposite, as it mimics that which happens naturally.....during spring flooding and other times with heavy rains/thunder showers. If you are not inclined to believe me, I suggest you actually go out with some dredgers and see for yourself. It's really fun, it's safe, it's a benefit to the person and the stream.

Respectfully,

Randy L. Witham
randywitham@charter.net

